

Sour Patch Kids by Thetolwrites

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, Alternate Universe - Normal High School, Babies, Billy Hargrove Has PTSD, Billy Hargrove Needs Love, Billy has a kid, Bisexual Steve Harrington, Domestic Fluff, Fluff, Gay Billy Hargrove, Good Babysitter Steve Harrington, Hopper is Billy's foster dad/uncle, M/M, Younger! Steve Harrington, teen dad Billy

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Heather Holloway, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Original Child Character(s), Robin Buckley, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Robin Buckley/Heather Holloway

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Summary:

Billy Hargrove is hot. Billy is hot, angry and terrifying. Steve is practically drooling for him. Billy is the senior king of Hawkins High. Steve is the just the loser junior that has the only reputable babysitting gig in high school. He would never have a chance with him

The only thing is, Billy has a secret. Billy has a kid.

1. Jelly Beans

Author's Note:

The year is 2020.
Steve is 16 and a junior.
Billy is 18 and a senior.

The day Billy Hargrove moved into town. Steve knew he was fucked. He was completely and undeniably fucked. Billy Hargrove was the hottest thing to roll into Hawkins since the heatwave of 2016. He came speeding into the parking lot like a bat out of hell. As he stepped out of his Camaro and walked into the school like he owned the damn place, Steve couldn't keep his eyes off of him. He was all tanned skin and bulging muscle. Everything about him screamed the ocean, from the sandy blonde curls to the deep blue eyes. Steve had never wanted to go deep-diving more in his life.

Steve already knew that he was bi. He finally came to terms with it whenever he realized that both his ex and her new boyfriend were hot. Thank you so much for the confusion, Jonathan Byers. So, when Steve found himself hopelessly attracted to the new kid in town he accepted it. He also accepted the fact that he had no chance with him because every single girl in the school seemed to dig their claws into him on sight. Billy Hargrove had blushing girls tripping over themselves as they followed him down the hall and tried to show him around.

Steve sighs as he watches the sexiest man alive walk into the Hawkins's high office, before deciding to let it go. He forces the new kid out of his head and goes to his first class. The same class that he was currently failing. That class happened to be English and every morning Mrs. H said or did something that made him want to gouge his eyeballs out with a spoon. He didn't have anything against Mrs. H. In fact, she was one of his favorite teachers, he just... hated literature and the entire English language altogether Reading was

hard enough and then you had to ask him to analyze Shakespeare and Poe on top of it? Fuck that. He was always going to hate English.

Steve greets Mrs. H before sinking into his chair in the back of the room. He looks out the window to start daydreaming throughout the class as his classmates file in around him. Literature analysis was one of the required classes that everyone had to take to graduate. It was fucking hard, and everyone hated it. This meant that the people in the room were mostly seniors and a few juniors that wanted to just get it over. Mrs. H. starts class after the bell rings. Suddenly, the new kid comes knocking at the door as the announcements start sounding over the intercom. Steve desperately wished he had bionic hearing so he could understand what the two were saying. He let himself get his hopes up when he entered the room and stood by Mrs. H's desk.

He looked too big in the classroom, even though Steve was probably taller than him. He just looked too big for... life. As he stood there, he seemed leaps and bounds above anything Steve could even hope to achieve. Steve's heart began to pound as Mrs. H hands him some papers and points to the empty seat beside Steve. The kid nods and smiles at her charmingly before making his way over toward him. Steve's heart tightens in his chest with every step he takes closer to him. He wills his cheeks not to heat up as he looks over at the literal god that for some fucking reason decided to move to Hawkins, Indiana. Steve felt like the universe was just taunting him at this point.

As he sits down, Steve gives him a nervous smile and softly says. "Hey uh. Welcome to Hawkins? I'm Steve Harrington." He sticks out his hand, offering a handshake like they were middle-aged men talking about business deals. Before he could curse himself and retract his hand, the new kid tilts his head at him with a small smile. He takes Steve's hand with a nod. "Billy Hargrove. Thanks."

Steve blushes as he looks into deep ocean eyes and feels his mouth go dry. Billy's hands seemed huge compared to his own. His calloused hand was wrapped around Steve's and Steve wondered how much he worked out as his eyes stray to Billy's biceps. He nods and takes his hand away, giggling nervously as he looks up at Billy to see him smirking at him. He quickly looks away and picks at some tape on his desk instead. "I would um... I would offer some help with catching up and stuff, but I'm shit at this class." Billy snorts as he looks down at the syllabus Mrs. H had given him earlier. "Don't need it, Pretty boy. Thanks." Steve sputters softly, almost choking on air as he looks at him. Before he could ask just what the hell Billy meant by that, Mrs. H saved him from embarrassing himself further by asking him about an essay that he hadn't even started yet.

That was the only interaction Steve had with Billy that morning as Billy had to catch up with all they had done since the start of the semester. Steve caught himself watching Billy more times than he'd like to admit that morning. He couldn't keep his eyes off of him, his hands especially. Steve finally had to stop watching him altogether when he started imaging those rough, big hands wrapped around his throat.

That didn't stop Steve from thinking of him, however, Steve kept finding his thoughts drifting back to tanned skin and blonde curls during all of his classes. English was the only class he had with Billy so far. During lunch Steve still found himself watching Billy Hargrove from across the room. Billy seemed so different from when they'd met in the morning. Sure, he'd been a bit cocky, but Steve hadn't expected *this*.

He was sitting with the jocks, demanding attention and obedience from everyone. Steve was slightly shocked to watch Billy face off his ex-best friend Tommy Hall and win. Tommy sat down almost as quickly as he'd stood up when Billy got into his face. Tommy was a loyal follower, but he wasn't a complete pushover. Steve was fascinated as to how he'd gotten Tommy to just roll over so fast. Billy Hargrove had to be the most

charming motherfucker on the planet to just... integrate into the most popular kids of Hawkin's High on his first day without anyone batting an eye.

Suddenly Nancy sits down in front of him with Jonathan, obstructing his view of Billy charming the football players into his back pocket. "So the new kid?" She asks with a smirk, laughing as Steve begins to stutter and turn red. "What? No! Shut up! He's just! He's interesting! Okay!" She laughs and rolls her eyes. "Sure, dingus. Because you make heart eyes and practically drool over anything you find interesting." Robin snorts as she sits down beside him with a roll of her eyes. Steve pouts and steals a fry from her tray. She slaps his shoulder in retaliation.

"I am NOT making heart eyes at him. I'm just... curious. Why the hell is a guy like that-" He gestures toward Billy who was laughing. Steve almost had to squint at the sight. He was like the sun had been personified. "-in a place like this? It doesn't make any sense." Jon hums as he turns to look at Billy before turning back around and stealing an onion ring off of Steve's tray. Steve hisses at him and sets up a wall with his hands around his precious golden rings of fried onion. "Maybe he has family or something here? Who knows? He'll probably just be another jock douchebag." Jon remarks as he chews on his stolen ring thoughtfully.

Steve frowns and pouts at that. "Well, I don't think we should immediately judge him, ya know? I used to be a jock douchebag and look at me now! Hanging out with the dweebs." Jon kicks at him under the table. "Shut up. You're a bigger dweeb than any of us."

Steve snorts and continues. "And even if he does have family here why did he move to Hawkins in the middle of the first term, his senior year? Something just isn't adding up." Robin hums and shrugs. "Sometimes life deals us shitty cards. It's not really any of your business, Stevie. Now give me your pudding and I'll give you half my burger." Steve sighs and hands it over, listening to his friends talk as he stares absentmindedly at the newest mystery in Hawkins. Robin was right, of course. She normally was. It wasn't any of Steve's business who Billy was or why he'd come to Hawkins. Steve wanted to know anyway.

Steve loved basketball, really he did. He probably wasn't going to be the next Michael Jordan, but he was good. Maybe even good enough to get into college on a scholarship. Lord knows his grades weren't winning any scholarships anytime soon. He wasn't good at school but He was confident in basketball. That meant a lot when he didn't have a lot of confidence anywhere else.

Billy knocked that confidence cleanout of Steve in five minutes of them being on the same court. Steve was staring up at the flickering gym lights, wondering when he even got knocked off his feet. He wanted to sit up, but he felt dizzy... really dizzy. The last thing he remembered he'd gotten the ball from Tommy and was about to shoot when someone ran him over like a fucking freight train and stole the ball from him. He must have fallen and hit his head.

Now that he thinks about it he hit his head pretty hard. He tried to remember who'd knocked him down so hard but he couldn't focus. He felt like everything was spinning too fast. Did the world spin like that normally? His lungs began to burn slightly, making him pant as he feels an oncoming panic attack start to take over. He didn't want to pass out. Fainting sucked and scared the shit out of him but shadows were already dancing in the corners of his vision.

He closes his eyes as faces start appearing over him, concerned looks of his teammates and coach staring down at him. Steve heard them talking to him over what sounded like an ocean of water. Suddenly hands were on him, hauling him up and into someone's arms. After his panic attack slowly ceased, he registered that he was being carried. He opens his eyes as he hears a soft, gruff voice talking to him. Steve blinks his eyes open up at Billy as he moves him through the halls of their school toward the nurse. "Shit. I'm sorry, Steve. I didn't mean to hit you so hard, princess. You just... you were moving your feet. You gotta learn to plant your feet. Draw a charge so I won't bowl you over next time."

Billy's blue eyes stared into deep brown, Steve smiles a little to himself. Billy looked pretty when he was worried. Well... he always looked pretty. He didn't like how guilty Billy looked so he managed to nod a little. "mmkay." He mumbles as Billy lays him down on the nurse's cot. His head finally starting to clear a bit as he watches Billy talk to the nurse. He suddenly turns to Steve, biting his lip as he looks him over. "You gonna be okay if I head back?" Steve manages to smile a little as he nods again. "Yeah... yeah, I'll be okay. Thank you." Billy rolls his eyes. "Don't thank me I'm the one that knocked you out."

Steve's smile widens a bit as he looks at Billy. "It's okay. You took care of me. Don't worry about it." Billy sighs, opening his mouth to say something before he nods and leaves Steve with the nurse. Steve was sent home after laying down for a while. He thought about Billy the entire night when he got home.

2. Rock Candy

Summary for the Chapter:

Moving to Hawkins, Indiana with a three-year-old baby wasn't easy. It certainly wasn't Billy's first choice of options either.

Billy was tired. Even before having to move to Hawkins, Billy was tired. He'd been a father since fifteen, and that was hard. It wasn't even raising James that was difficult, James was a pretty good baby unless he was sick or tired. It was living with Neil and trying to raise James that was the hard part. Billy hadn't been in love with James' mother, Alisha, but when she'd gotten pregnant... something in him changed. He still didn't love her, but he loved his son. Even when he was in her womb Billy loved him, it was shocking. Billy hated kids at the time, but he almost automatically loved his son. James wasn't even born when Billy gave his son the nickname Jamie.

James Apollo Hargrove was born on Wednesday, September 13th, 2017 weighing just 8 pounds and 3 ounces. He was born as a Virgo. He had his dad's blue eyes and his mom's button nose. He was the best thing that ever happened to Billy Hargrove.

Alisha was never going to be the mother that James needed, though. She was all fire without the warmth and Billy knew that. That's why he'd stayed with her for so long, they were similar. She had wanted to be a mother to James at first but... after he was born she decided that she wasn't ready. And Billy didn't mind. He was more than happy to take over full custody of his son. They had parted on good terms, but the last he heard of Alisha she was in jail for destruction of property and some drug charges. Not long after that, Billy had to leave town.

Moving to Hawkins, Indiana with a three-year-old baby wasn't easy. It certainly wasn't his first choice of options either. He wanted to stay in Cali with the sun and the beach, with his friends and babysitters he trusts. He doesn't know anyone here, besides his uncle, Jim Hopper and his girlfriend Joyce Byers. He likes them, don't get him wrong, and sure, he trusts them with James. He just reminds him too

much of his mom sometimes and that hurts. After she'd left Billy and Neil, she'd gotten really bad on drugs. She'd ended up overdosing a few years later when Billy was fourteen. Billy hadn't known because his father wouldn't take any of Jim's calls. Add that to the list of things Billy resents Neil for.

Jim Hopper was a heavy-set man with a big beard and an even bigger heart. He was the chief of police. That was simultaneously comforting and anxiety-inducing. Jim answered Billy's call and offered his home to him and Jamie within five minutes and that was just the type of selfless kindness he did. Jim was a gentle giant, but it wasn't hard for Billy to imagine what he'd be like if someone he loved was in danger. Jim wasn't much of a talker and Billy was grateful for it. He wasn't ready to talk about his dad or his mom or anything at all. But Jim was nice, he asked Billy what he wanted to go to college for, helped Billy get a job, looked after Jamie without Billy even having to ask. It was like Jim wanted nothing more than for Billy to succeed and that was... new.

While Billy liked Jim, he loved Joyce. Joyce was a super mom if Billy had ever seen one. She was a skinny woman with brown hair and crazy eyes. She spoke like everything she said was gospel and that if you didn't listen to her the world would end. She was always cooking or bringing over food. Something about her just drew Billy in. It was like she knew exactly what Billy was going through and he didn't even have to ask. The moment he arrived in Hawkins, she had already had Jamie's room done and had enrolled Billy in his classes. He hasn't met Joyce's kids yet.

Jim also had a daughter. Some girl named Jane, Jim adopted from foster care about a year earlier. She didn't talk much, but she was welcoming and sweet. She wasn't home until dark most nights. She always seemed to be with her friends or off in her room, listening to that god awful pop music. She was tough too, she just had this way about her. It was like she was a fully grown woman in a fourteen-year-old's body. She had no problem telling Billy that his music stank or that his shirt was dumb. Billy liked her a lot. Jamie adored her. Jane would pick him up and blow raspberries all over his chubby cheeks first thing in the morning and he would scream and squeal. It was some of the cutest shit Billy's ever seen.

So, Hawkins isn't a horrible place to live. It's safe and secure. If Jamie grew up here, Billy would never have to worry about him getting kidnapped or getting lost. Everyone knew everyone and yeah that has its downsides, but... they watch out for each other. Hawkins is okay. It's just... It's not home, but he's trying his best to make it as close to home as he can, for Jamie's sake.

He got a job the moment he drove into town, living with the chief of police meant he had connections to almost everyone in town. Billy getting a job at Benny's Burgers was one of the easiest things he's ever done. Benny was a good friend of Jim's, apparently. They'd grown up together. Benny had grown up with his uncle and his mom. It was weird, being in the town his mother had grown up in.

He couldn't imagine her here. Every time he thought of her he thought of the ocean, the sunshine, her soft, beautiful voice singing over the crashing of the waves. He just couldn't find her here. He was out of place. Neither of them belonged here, but he was trying to make the best out of it. His safety and more importantly, Jamie's safety meant that Billy had to get out of Neil's house and the only other place for him to turn was his uncle. His uncle meant Hawkins and Hawkins meant... second chances.

Billy had been in town for two weeks before he had to go to Hawkins high. He had considered just dropping out. Joyce had convinced him to at least try going to school, since he only had a few months left until graduation, anyway. Billy was so homesick that first day. The whole time while he was getting ready he spent thinking about his friends back home and how all of their plans for the senior year had been completely fucked by Neil. He wouldn't get to graduate with his friends. He wouldn't get to go to prom with them. The more he thought about it the more frustrated he got until he just sighed and decided to let it go. He'd just have to Facetime his friends after school. That would help.

After he'd gotten ready himself, he focused on getting Jamie up and ready

for the day. His little bean was not a fan of mornings. Jamie always looked so confused when Billy woke him up. His blonde curls sticking up in every single direction as Billy wiped the drool off his chin and kissed his forehead. "Morning, little man." He mumbles to him softly as he picks him up out of his bed. Billy can't help but smile as James wraps his little arms around his neck and yawns loudly in his ear as he hugs him tightly. "Morning, daddy" He mumbles back sleepily as Billy brings him to the bathroom to help him use the toilet and brush his teeth.

After James brushes his teeth he kisses Billy and hops down from his step stool to run to his closet and pick out his clothes for the day. Billy smiles as he watches his son meticulously look through his clothing options before picking out a red t-shirt and some jeans. He brings them over to Billy who helps him get dressed, all the while thinking about how watching his son was like looking in a mirror.

They then sit on the floor, Jamie sitting in his father's lap as Billy gently combs through his curls. His hair was getting long again, long enough that he could almost put it into a ponytail. Billy smiles, humming softly as Jamie lays against him and plays with a toy absentmindedly. "So, Jamie, you know what today is?"

James looks up at his dad, his head tilted to the side. "school?" He asks as he stares at Billy with his piercing blue eyes. Billy nods, smiling softly as he finishes up his hair and turns him around so he could kiss all over his cheeks. "Yep. Today is your first day at your new preschool. Are you excited?" Jamie grins, his smile taking up his whole face as he nods. "Yes! Let's go!" He cries, already wanting to jump up and leave. Billy laughs, wishing he could share in his enthusiasm for the day ahead. "Alright, alright! First, you have to decide which toys are coming with you! Pick two and then we'll have breakfast and then it'll be time for school."

Jamie was always so well-behaved. Billy doesn't know how he got blessed with such a sweet kid. In less than twenty minutes the two were in the Camaro, Jamie tucked safely into his car seat, softly making airplane noises as he plays with his favorite toy jet. Billy checks on him in the rearview mirror as they pull up to a stop sign. He looked so cute, smiling

all big as he plays with his plane, crashing it into his legs as he makes an explosion sound effect. It warms Billy from the inside out, a small smile working its way onto his face. It didn't last long though. Billy tensed as soon as they neared their destination. His hands tightening around the steering wheel as he pulls into the daycare parking lot.

He knew Jamie was going to be fine. He knew that, but it didn't make him any less nervous. He'd been trusting the same daycare with Jamie since he was three months old. He didn't trust people with James. His son meant everything to him. Joyce had recommended the daycare, the same place she'd sent her children when they were too young to be left at home. Billy wanted to trust Joyce, he was just... nervous.

Jamie was practically squirming out of his car seat in the back, however. He was already tugging at his seatbelt impatiently watching all the other kids going inside. Billy chuckles as he whines. "Daddy! I wanna go!" He pouts at Billy from the back, as he finally moves to the backseat to let him out. The two walk hand in hand into the daycare. Jamie already grinning and waving at the kids down the hall, always so eager to make new friends.

After speaking with the daycare teachers, Billy felt a bit more at ease. He kneels to his son's level looking him in the eyes as he speaks with certainty. "If you need anything, you tell them to call me, okay? I'll be here right away." Jamie groans, pouting as he tries to wiggle out of Billy's grasp. "Daddy! Can I go play now?" Billy laughs softly, letting out a sigh as he hugs him tightly. "Okay! Okay. I love you. Remember that uncle Jim is going to be picking you up after school. Have a good day okay?" Jamie giggles into Billy's neck, hugging him back as tight as his little three-year-old arms will allow. "Okay! I love you! Bye-Bye!" He says before pulling away and taking the teacher's hand to go to his new classroom. Billy watches him go into his classroom, sighing as he turns to go back to his car. He missed him already.

3. Pop Rocks

Summary for the Chapter:

Billy's first day of Hawkins high wasn't a walk in the park.

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the super late update! Depression is a bitch!

Billy allowed his radio to blare all the way to the school. He was trying to drown out the worried thoughts he had about the day ahead. Normally, Jamie was great, but what if today was the day he got upset and needed his dad there? What if he gets scared and Billy isn't there to comfort him? What if they try to call him and he doesn't get it? What if Jim forgets to pick up Jamie? fourth-period Billy groans as he pulls into the parking lot, chewing on his lip as he leaned over into the passenger seat and got his backpack. He takes a bit of time to survey the kids surrounding him.

Some of them were beginning to head toward the building, most were still milling around their cars. He tried his best to force the judgemental thoughts of "hicks" and "rednecks" out of his head. He sighs, stepping out of the car and making his way into the building. The moment he steps into the hall, he feels like he's being hunted. Girls and guys alike all turning to look at him., the new kid, the outsider. He hated how he got a thrill from the attention. He lays it on thick as he walks into the office, all charming winks and wide smirks that show off his sparkly, white teeth.

While he enjoyed the attention, Billy honestly couldn't have given a shit less about high school. He didn't care about girls or guys. He didn't care about petty drama or winning state. The only thing he cared about was James and he was in a new place with people he didn't know and Billy felt like he was being balanced on a knife's

edge. He sat in the guidance counselor's office as the counselor wrestled with an ancient printer and told him about the school.

She seemed like a sweet lady, but Billy was anxious to get into his classes. He didn't care about the work, he just wanted something to take his mind off of his son. Eventually, she manages to get his schedule printed, and allows him to look it over. He was almost disappointed at how easy most of his classes seemed. His fourth-period chemistry class was going to be a toss-up, but otherwise, his schedule seemed pretty simple.

After reviewing the schedule with him, the counselor walks Billy to his first class. Literature analysis. Billy could ace this class in his sleep. The moment he walks into the room hushed whispers start to fall over the students in front of him. He resists the urge to smirk as the teacher hands him a stack of papers and points to a seat in the back.

Billy made his way over to the seat, not paying attention to the people he was sitting near... at first. Suddenly, the boy sitting beside him sticks a hand out to him. "Hey uh. Welcome to Hawkins? I'm Steve Harrington." Billy smiles as he takes in the boy. He was lanky, pale, and honestly... adorable. Billy would call him pretty even. He was all nerves and chocolate brown eyes. His cheeks were already dusting a beautiful shade of pink as Billy takes his hand and replies. "Billy Hargrove. Thanks."

Whenever he withdrew his hand, he began to pick nervously at a piece of tape on his desk. "I would um... I would offer some help with catching up and stuff, but I'm shit at this class." He muttered all embarrassed as he looks down at his hands. Dumb and pretty, exactly what Billy loves in a man. He couldn't help but scoff lightly at the work in front of him. It was child's play. "Don't need it, Pretty boy.

Thanks.” Billy mutters as he opens one of the packets, beginning to skim through it.

He smirks softly as he hears Steve beside him begin to sputter and cough in shock. The teacher Mrs. Hinkle? Hagen? Hail? Billy couldn’t remember but she suddenly called on Steve breaking the tension between the two and ruining Billy’s fun. He frowns, turning back to his packets and his phone. Secretly checking it under the desk now and again just to be sure that Jamie’s teachers hadn’t called.

After literature, he had some more English and math classes. He wouldn’t have any trouble. The only trouble Billy had was at lunch. It didn’t take long to scope out the popular kids. They were all sitting together at a table off to the right side of the cafeteria. The trouble wasn’t getting to sit at the popular table. Why should he? He was good-looking, new and a jock. No reason for them not to accept him.

No, the trouble came when a stocky, fat-faced, annoying-as-hell kid named Tommy decided to get in his face. His breath stank, and it was obvious he was just posturing. Getting in a fight on his first day honestly sounded exhausting. The kid probably had never gotten in a real fight his entire life. He was a follower, not a leader. You could tell just by looking at him. Billy just scoffed and rolled his eyes, clapping his hand on his shoulder as he gives him an easy grin. “You said you were on the basketball team right? I’m trying out after school, you’ll have to show me your moves man.”

The idea of showing off was like instant kryptonite to Tommy. He sat down like a well-trained mutt beside Billy at the lunch table, completely ignoring his girlfriend, Chloe? Cary? Callie? Carole? Billy honestly didn’t remember as he listened to Tommy drone on and on into his ear. Across the cafeteria, he locked his eyes on Steve from the morning. He was cute. He was surrounded by his friends, dorks by

the look at them, but he seemed happy. He was laughing at something the girl beside him had said. Billy briefly wondered if they were dating before deciding they weren't. The girl just screamed lesbian.

Suddenly Tommy spoke up in his ear. "Steve, huh? Yeah. I used to be best friends with the guy, then he started dating Wheeler. Now, he's lame as fuck. He babysits kids on the weekend instead of hosting parties like he used to." Billy hums in acknowledgment. "Yeah... lame." He mutters, too focused on the way Steve's eyes light up when he smiles to give Tommy a real answer.

Basketball tryouts were hard. He was too worried about Jamie. Worried that he had a bad day. Worried that Jim forgot to pick him up. Worried that he was being bullied or he didn't make any friends. He was just... worried.

So, when the ball came to him... he wasn't thinking about it. He just... went for it. He barely even registered knocking into someone until after he'd made the shot and he noticed that many of his teammates had hovered around someone on the floor. Fuck. There goes his opportunity to get on the team.

He hesitantly joins the crowd around the kid he'd just barreled over and knocked straight into the ground and Billy wanted to punch himself. Steve laid on the ground before him, his chest heaving in deep pants as he closes his eyes tight. He was having a panic attack.

Billy's body reacted before his mind had the chance to catch up. He picked up Steve and walked him out of the gym and toward the

nurse's office. Well... what he hoped was toward the nurse's office. Steve's panic attack slowly began to subside as Billy walked down the hallway. He began to talk to him, softly, trying to comfort him as he came back to earth. "Shit. I'm sorry, Steve. I didn't mean to hit you so hard, princess. You just... you were moving your feet. You gotta learn to plant your feet. Draw a charge so I won't bowl you over next time."

Billy glances down into deep, brown, doe eyes and he feels his heart skip a bit. His face begins to heat up as Steve stares up at him. They were so close. Billy could see every detail on his flawless face. He was adorable, all soft skin, warm eyes, and eyelashes the length of a football field. Steve's head nods slightly as he maintains eye contact with him. He even manages to smile at him. "mmkay..." He mumbled as Billy finally stepped into the nurse's office.

She was on the phone but she motioned for Billy to lay Steve on a nearby cot. Billy turned back to the nurse to explain what had happened. She didn't seem as concerned as Billy thought she should be. He frowns but turns back to Steve, all the same, resisting the urge to run his fingers through silky brown locks as he bites his lip. "You gonna be okay if I head back?" He asks softly, not wanting to leave him, but not having a choice.

Steve smiles softly at him, nodding his head once again. Billy wanted to yell at him to stop moving so much. "Yeah... yeah, I'll be okay. Thank you." Billy rolls his eyes. "Don't thank me I'm the one that knocked you out."

Steve's smile only seems to brighten as he looks up at Billy. "It's okay. You took care of me. Don't worry about it." Billy sighs, opening his mouth to discredit that claim but decided against it. He just nods and heads back toward the gym to finish his tryout. He thought about

Steve the entire night when he got home.

4. Cotton Candy

Summary for the Chapter:

Steve Harrington - Hawkins Resident Babysitter

Steve groans as the kids surrounding him just seem to get louder after he'd asked them for the tenth time that night to shut up. His head pounds as he watches Dustin animatedly talking about some newly discovered lizard they were learning about in class. Holly began to wail in her high chair as Steve tried his best to usher Dustin out of his way in the kitchen. "Dusty, I love you, buddy. But I got knocked the **fuck** out during basketball earlier and I can barely think so **please** shut up."

Dustin pouts heavily, going down the stairs of the basement to sulk. Steve coos at Holly as he places her food down and begins to feed her. Her cries quickly quiet, and Steve relaxes as his ears stop ringing. The party was downstairs watching some movie that they probably shouldn't be. Steve sighs as he looks toward the clock. It was only seven... Three more hours before the Wheelers come home.

A few months ago, if you had told Steve that he would be spending his Friday night making sandwiches and helping preteens organize DND character sheets instead of going to the raging parties of Hawkins' High, he would've laughed in your face. Life often takes unexpected turns though, and somehow along the way, Steve Harrington had become a babysitter. Every mother in Hawkins and the surrounding towns had his number and his weekends and weeknights were normally filled for two weeks in advance.

He didn't exactly hate his little job. The kids were fun to be around and the nights weren't *that* stressful... *most of the time*. Plus, the money was okay too. He didn't really need it... but it was something

to keep his dad from breathing down his neck. His father didn't know what Steve did; he didn't care that much. Steve knew that if he did, he wouldn't approve of him taking care of kids - It was a "*woman's job*".

Tonight, however, Steve just wanted to get home. His head ached, he felt sore and tired. He just wanted a long, hot bath featuring soft candlelight and his most soothing playlist on Spotify. It would be a miracle if he would even consider doing his homework tonight.

Steve slowly descended the stairs to the basement with the peace offering of dinner. The group of preteens barely looked up from their game as Steve placed their plates of chicken-alfredo and garlic bread in front of them. His job had taught him a lot of things, learning how to cook without burning a house down was one of them.

The party was preoccupied for the rest of the night until the Wheelers came home. Karen and Ted coming back from their date night earlier than normal. Ted looked pretty angry, but... it really wasn't any of Steve's business. He loaded up all the kids in his backseat, dropping them off at home one by one until he was able to head home himself.

He immediately started filling his bathtub, turning on the water as hot as it would go and dumping a quarter of lavender bubble bath solution into the tub as well. The warm air started steaming up the mirror as he stripped down and stretched out his sore muscles. He opens the cabinet to try to find something to kill his headache. Luckily, the bottle of ibuprofen was front and center so he didn't have to search for long. Steve downed three without water before he sunk into the tub to relax.

He turned on his favorite soft album and was prepared to just blissfully forget the world existed until his bath water ran cold. The bubbles were soft against his skin, leaving his legs feeling smooth and clean. He sighs, leaning his head back against the tub. He let his eyes drift close until his phone vibrated with a notification.

“Twitter - New follower!

@BillyHargroan just followed you!”

Steve sat up so fast he almost dropped his phone in the water. Immediately he followed him back and started scrolling through his feed. He was disappointed to find that his feed was sorta dry. It was mostly just pictures of the beach or parties. It was empty of any personality. It could’ve passed as a bot account. Steve frowns as he scrolls through the feed, jumping as Billy suddenly sends him a private message. “Hey. uh Tommy gave me ur @. I felt super bad about earlier are u doing ok?”

Steve couldn’t help the blush that was heating up his cheeks, grinning down at his phone as he bit his bottom lip excitedly. “Yeah! I’m totally fine. Did you end up making the team?”

“Yeah. I didn’t think I was going 2 but here we r.” As the two started to talk and get to know one another, Billy stopped responding to Steve’s texts. Steve was disappointed but tried not to read into it... Maybe Billy was just busy. He curled up in bed that night falling asleep with dreams of curly blonde hair and ocean blue eyes.

**

The next morning Steve overslept, showing up to class just as the late bell rang with his hair a mess and still wearing the clothes he slept

in. Billy chuckles as he slides into the seat beside him. “Good morning, pretty boy. Couldn’t sleep?”

Steve smiles, shaking his head. “Slept too much is more like it.” Billy leaned over, brushing Steve’s hair back so he could see his face. Steve blushes as he stares into soft, concerned blue eyes. “Are you feeling okay from yesterday? No concussion or anything?”

Steve’s voice seemed to get stuck in his throat as Billy just leans in even closer than before. His thoughts were racing at a million miles a minute, so his words came out jumbled. “Yes! No! I-I mean!... I mean I’m fine...”

Billy snorts, nodding his head as he looks at him. “Alright. If you say so, Pretty boy.” Steve started to respond as Mrs. H called on him to ask about his essay. Steve felt his face heat up as he admitted that he still hadn’t done it. She sighs at him but just shakes her head and moves on to another student. Billy chuckles beside him as he buries his head in his textbook. “Shut up! I suck at this class and essays.”

Billy’s snickering stops as he turns to him. “Do you want me to tutor you?” Steve felt his heart leap into his throat. “What?” Billy smiles at him, pearly white teeth making Steve want to squint. “I can tutor you. I told you this class was easy for me. We can head to the library after practice tonight if you want.” Steve’s heart began pounding as he found himself already agreeing. “Oh, um... yeah sure. Thanks.”

Billy smirks, giving Steve a wink before turning back to his textbook.

Steve thought his heart exploded.

That afternoon after basketball practice Steve stood by the doors, waiting for Billy to show after seeing him dash into the changing room the moment practice was over. He waited a total of fifteen minutes before getting into his car and heading home. He had to babysit that night, anyway.

Around nine pm, Steve was heating up a TV dinner in his microwave when he got a dm on Twitter from Billy. “Hey. I’m sorry for ditching u after practice. I had a family emergency.”

Steve found himself rolling his eyes, but he just responded with “It’s fine. Hope everything’s okay.” Billy responded relatively quickly but Steve didn’t have the need to check it. If he wanted to be annoying and play the “Hot and Cold” game Steve had been playing it with girls for years. He was a professional. The best way to play was not to play at all. Steve was done with games.

No one said being a dad was easy and being a teenage dad doesn't make it any easier. Jamie was an angel ninety percent of the time, but he was also still just a toddler. Toddlers throw fits and get enraged at silly things sometimes. Billy always tried to calm him down and comfort him, but he wasn't good at it all the time. He wasn't a perfect dad all the time. Hell, sometimes he felt like he wasn't even a **good** dad.

Sometimes he wanted to be selfish. He wanted to be a teenager and go to parties. He wanted to hang out with people his age. He wanted to go on dates without bringing along a car seat. He wanted to throw away his responsibilities for the night and just be a kid without worrying about *his* kid. He felt like he was dragging himself into a rut. He loves Jamie. He really does, but he wants time to himself sometimes to which makes him just feel more guilty.

Jamie's first week had gone swimmingly. He'd made friends with everyone in his class and even got a gold star from the teacher. On Friday, after practice Billy was met with so many missed calls and texts from Hopper and Joyce he felt his stomach drop to his shoes before he rushed home without even reading them.

He could hear Jamie's wailing the moment he stepped into the house, he was sitting with Hopper in his recliner as he rocked him slowly, rubbing his back soothingly as Jamie just sobbed and sniffled in pain. "What happened?" He asked breathless and feeling like his heart was about to give out.

Hopper looked up at him, confused. "I texted you? He just has an ear infection. When I picked him up, he wasn't feeling well, so we went to the doctor." Billy felt the relief wash over him. Jamie was fine. It was just an ear infection. He was going to be fine. Jamie had sat up at the sound of his father's voice, sobbing as he reached out to him.

Billy took him from Hopper gently, mumbling his gratitude before going into the nursery to sit in the rocking chair with him. Billy had completely forgotten about the arrangement he'd made with Steve that morning until he was getting Jamie ready for bed, several hours later.

Billy smiles as he watches Jamie climb onto his bed and pull out the book he'd chosen for Billy to read to him that night. He had a cute little pout on his face; he always did when he was sick. Billy turned on his nightlight before sitting in his bed with him, kissing his head as he starts to read to him.

Jamie fell asleep halfway through. Billy sat with his son for a while longer, texting Steve while he stroked his soft blonde hair. After the responses ran dry quickly, Billy frowned. He felt selfish again. He enjoyed Steve's company. He was cute, a little dumb, but cute and sweet.

He'd love to take Steve on an actual date. Not just under the guise of studying, but a night out; dinner and a movie was always the classic choice, and it was normally a good time. The thought of Steve laughing at something Billy said over a nice meal at a nice diner or Steve leaning into Billy's side as he wrapped his arm around him in the theater brought a blush to Billy's face and made his heart thump a little in his chest.

Billy really just wanted to go out. Here he was on a Friday night, getting ready for bed at eight PM instead of a party like every other senior he knew. He sighs, slowly climbing out of his son's bed, taking the utmost care in not waking him from his slumber.

Jamie's face scrunches up adorably in his sleep as he lets out a soft, sweet little sound. Billy smiles down at his son, tucking him in tighter and kisses his forehead before retreating back to his own room.

Being a father was hard. Being a teen father was even harder. There was always going to be things that Billy desired that he would never have, but he wouldn't trade it for the world. He loved his son, and at the end of the day, that's all that mattered.

5. Gummy Bears

Summary for the Chapter:

Billy really needs a night out. Joyce makes it happen.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'M SO SORRY IT'S TAKEN ME SO LONG TO
UPDATE LIFE IS A BITCH SOMETIMES

It took Joyce about five minutes after seeing Billy that next morning. It took five minutes, and she was already telling him he needed to get out. Billy already *knew* this. It wasn't like he had any options though. It wasn't like he could leave both Jane and Jamie alone for a night while he went to a party. Leaving two children alone because both Jim and Joyce were working late shifts.

Billy just sighs in response to Joyce's nagging. A fussy Jamie throws his bowl of oatmeal on the floor before his lower lip trembled and he wailed. Billy didn't have the energy to even get upset. He just picks up the bowl, Jane setting to clean up the mess on the floor wordlessly as Billy takes his son into his arms, cooing at him despite his loud cries as he rocks him around the kitchen, turning to Joyce after he'd calmed down enough that he could speak to her over the sound of his sobs. "Well... I'd love to, but that's not really an option right now. Both of you work tonight. I'll be fine."

Joyce scoffs, rolling her eyes as she takes Jamie. She kisses all over his soft, pudgy cheeks, making him giggle before she puts him back in his highchair. Jane immediately began making airplane noises as she fed him from his fresh bowl of oatmeal. "No. Billy, honey, you're so tense you look like a rubber band that's about to snap. You need to just... go blow off some steam. I have the number to a good babysitter. He's already watching Will tonight, so I'm sure he won't mind coming over here and babysitting all three of the kids. I'll go

call him. You go make plans.” Billy groans, his eyes drifting to the ceiling as Joyce was already getting her phone out. He’d learned from day one; arguing with Joyce Byers is pointless. She’s always right.

He goes toward his room to get his phone, hoping to make plans with a certain brunette. As he collapses on his bed to write out what he hoped would be a charming invitation for a night out. “hey Stevie hows it goin?”

A solid start, casual and subtle. He sighed as waited on a reply and switched over to Instagram. It wasn’t long before he was scrolling through pictures of teens partying until they blacked out on his feed. Guys doing keg stands, girls wearing their sluttiest attire. Parties felt like such a thing of the past for Billy. Something he did *before* the birth of his son. Just the thought of going to a party nowadays made him anxious, antsy, like he was doing something wrong.

As he was going through his Instagram feed, his phone buzzed with a notification. Tommy Hall had sent him a DM. Actually, Tommy had sent him several DMs. Most of them were asking Billy if he wanted to hang out on a certain night or go to a certain party. Billy hadn’t responded to a single message... He would feel bad about it if Tommy wasn’t always such a dick.

Billy sighs, deciding to bite the bullet and text, Tommy, back. He was a douche, yeah, but he had connections everywhere in Hawkins. If there was a decent party on a Saturday night... Tommy would know. He responded to Billy quickly, lighting up his DMs with directions to the best party that night and the best people to buy weed from. It was oddly... fun. Billy felt like his younger self. All fake machismo and too much cologne as he strutted around town and destroyed shit for fun.

Billy finally received a response from Steve a few hours later as he was trying to do his hair for the first time in a month, instead of just haphazardly pulling it back into a ponytail or brushing out his bedhead and calling it good enough. “Oh, hey! Nothing much getting ready for work tonight. What about you?”

“Work? where do u work? and im gettin redy to party tonite.” Billy responded, leaning into the mirror as he placed his earring into his right earlobe, blowing the smoke from his cigarette out of the right side of his mouth toward the window. He hoped his cologne would overpower the smell of his cigarettes. Jamie despised the smell of smoke, he was such a drama queen coughing and hacking up a lung even if Billy had smoked just half of a cigarette. He was *definitely* Billy’s son.

ACDC was playing softly from his speakers as he shrugged on his leather jacket and stepped out of his room and into the hall. Hopper and Joyce had already left for work by the time he’d finished getting ready, but he could hear voices in the living room as he stepped down the hall. Loud, nasally, shrill voices that made him cringe as he creeps closer to the noise. Preteens. At least six of them, if the unsettling sounds were anything to go by.

He paused outside the archway of the living room and watched as organized chaos took over the normally peaceful space. As he watched, it confirmed his original suspicions as he saw Jane and five other kids sitting around the coffee table on the floor. They were getting out the pieces to some game as they all argued or talked with each other. What Billy hadn’t expected to see was... Steve Harrington with Jamie. Billy thought his heart would just beat out of his chest as he stared at the two on the couch. Jamie was so relaxed, his eyes starting to drift closed as Steve gently hummed to him and held him close to his chest.

Billy softly cleared his throat as he stepped into the room. Steve jolting slightly as he looked up at him. "Oh! H-Hey, I thought you already left." Jamie was wide awake now, giggling at he reached his arms up toward Billy. "Daddy!" He was practically squirming his way out of Steve's grasp. Billy chuckles and sighs, lifting him up and into his arms. He held him tight to his chest as Jamie played with his earring. "So um... You're a babysitter?" Billy asked as he turns back to Steve.

Steve's cheeks turned into a beautiful shade of pink as he looked away from Billy and toward the window, and his doe eyes were blown wide in surprise, but he didn't comment. "um yeah! The only consistent one in Hawkins, anyway. I didn't know you and Jane were siblings!" Jane suddenly spoke up from her place around the coffee table. "We're cousins. Billy, you don't need to worry! Steve is the *best* babysitter *ever*! You go have fun! We'll take care of Jamie!" She calls dismissively as she barely looked up from the game they were playing.

Billy sighs as he looks back toward his son. He was still sleepy, clinging to Billy and laying his small head on his shoulder. He bites his lip before turning his attention back to Steve. "If *anything* happens. *Anything* at *all*. Call me." He tried his best to look stern, but he was too nervous to look as intimidating as he hoped. Steve smiled at him warmly, nodding as he held out his arms to take Jamie back. "I will. I promise. Go have fun tonight."

Billy nods, hesitating for a second before handing his son over to Steve. He kisses Jamie's forehead before stepping back. Jamie was already getting comfortable in Steve's arms, waving up at Billy as he smiles and giggles. "Buh-bye! Have fun, Daddy!" Billy smiles and nods as he heads toward the door. "You too, Jamie. You tell Janie to call me if you need anything, okay?"

Jamie nodded, putting on his adorable serious pout as he nods. "I will, daddy!" Billy smiles at his son one last time, before heading out the door and into the Camaro.

When Billy arrived at the bonfire at the address of out-in-the-middle-of-nowhere, Hicksville, USA, he hadn't felt so out of place since he'd lived with Neil. Teens were drinking like it was the end of the world. Couples around the bonfire making out in what definitely couldn't be PG. Billy internally cringed. Why the hell did he think this would be a good idea?

Right as Billy was about to turn tail and head back to his car, a familiar (and very annoying) voice yelled out his name. "Hargrove! Get over here, man!" Tommy Hall had stopped shoving his tongue down Carol's throat long enough to call out to Billy. Other members of the team surrounded him, so Billy made his way over, hoping to find some more pleasant company.

It took about an hour, but Billy eventually loosened up. Not enough that he couldn't drive home or even enough that he would make a horrible decision like sleeping with Emily, who kept trying to sit in his lap and most definitely wasn't wearing panties under her miniskirt. He only stayed for three hours in total. He got back into his car, smiling and covered in a light sheen of sweat and beer. He felt better. It was fun to be an irresponsible teen again, even just for a few hours.

When he arrived home, he walked into a silent house. Billy knew

Steve was here because his car was still in the driveway, but he wasn't in the living room like he'd thought he'd be. He checked the rooms on the way down the hall. Jane and some red-headed girl, that he'd only met once or twice, were fast asleep in her room. Jim was still at work until midnight.

Billy tried to swallow down the nervousness that was raised into his stomach as he found Jamie's room empty. His heart was beating a million times a minute as the worst possibilities started running through his head. He slowly creaked open his own bedroom door to find Steve and Jamie fast asleep in his bed. Steve was holding onto Jamie protectively, his lips pressed to his forehead. Steve's phone was on the bedside table was softly playing. It was some old jazz song, but it was soothing.

Billy felt his heart skip as he watched the two. Jamie peacefully asleep, sucking his thumb as he clings to Steve's shirt. Steve looking so comfortable while sleeping in Billy's bed. Jamie's favorite bedtime stories were on the bed surrounding them. Billy almost regretted not being there to hear Steve read to his son. He wondered what voices Steve would use, what faces he would make, the sound of Jamie and Steve's laughter ringing out together.

Billy felt his heart clench in his chest as he bit his lip and moved over to the bed. He gently shook Steve's shoulder, his breath catching in his throat as sleep brown doe eyes meet misty ocean blue. "H-hey. I'm home..." Billy whispers as Steve yawns. A small, tired smile was tugging at his lips as he gently peels himself away from a snoring Jamie.

"Sorry. He missed you and he wanted to sleep in your bed." Steve whispers as he climbs out of the bed and bends down to put back on his shoes. "I guess I ended up falling asleep." He adds sheepishly as

he grabs his phone and turns off the music. Billy nods as he follows him outside of the bedroom. “Do-Don’t worry about it. Here, um... let me walk you to your car.”

Steve smiles and nods, pausing at the front door to grab his jacket. “O-Okay th-thanks.” It was too dark to tell properly, but Billy could’ve sworn he saw Steve’s beautiful face lighting up with pink as they stepped out onto the porch. He was hugging his jacket to his chest, the two walking leisurely, shyly dancing around each other as they neared Steve’s car. “S-so you’re a dad? Th-that’s why you don’t go to parties and hang out after practice, huh?” Steve asks, his voice gentle like he was unsure of how to bring it up.

Billy snorts and nods, shoving his hands into his jacket pocket as he kicks at some gravel in the driveway. “Yeah. Um... I had him when I was fifteen. Well, I mean, his *mom* had him when I was fifteen.”

Steve nods, biting his lip and hesitating before he asks “Where is-”

“His mom? We split up after Jamie was born. She didn’t want to be a mom, really, and I was okay with it. We’re friends, I guess, she’s just... in with the wrong crowd ya know? Jamie doesn’t deserve to be around that.” Steve nods along as Billy speaks.

“So-So it’s just you then? You’re raising him by yourself?” Billy felt his heckles raise at that question, tension and anger filling his core. “Yeah. Why? I’m perfectly capable of taking care of my son.”

Steve immediately backtracks, shaking his head desperately. “No! No! I know you are! That’s- I meant- I!” He closes his eyes tight as he stops walking as they near Steve’s car and he turns to face Billy, blurting out. “I just wanted to say I think it sounds really hard to be a teenager *and* single parent, but Jamie is a wonderful kid! He really really loves you so I think you’re an amazing father.”

His face had turned beat red in the moon's light from above them. He was staring down at Billy's boots harshly, his cheeks puffed out just the slightest bit, his pretty lips pressed together in an adorable pout. Really, the world must've been testing him at this point. The universe can't just place an adorable boy in front of Billy Hargrove that gets along with his kid and is as big of a sweetheart as he is attractive and still expect Billy to continue to have impulse control. Honestly, it's impossible.

The rage from earlier dissipated as soon as it appeared. In its place, a warm, fluttery feeling had risen into Billy's chest. He took a step closer to the embarrassed boy in front of him before he gently took his chin into his fingers and brought Steve's eyes back up to his own. "Thank you, pretty boy." He whispers before leaning in and pressing his lips to Steve's.

6. Black Licorice

Summary for the Chapter:

Even Jamie has a history with Neil.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm super sorry for the late update. PTSD is a bitch and I was in a hella bad abusive situation so I haven't felt up to writing. I hope this is good! I'll try to update more often!

Steve's breath seemed to stop altogether. Billy Hargrove was kissing him... **The** Billy Hargrove. The same Billy Hargrove he thought about in the shower and bed at night. The same Billy Hargrove he dreamed about almost every night. The same Billy Hargrove that kept his heart hammering in basketball and even worse in the showers afterward. It was like something out of a movie. The moonlight was hitting them just right, glinting off of Steve's car behind them and giving Billy this supernatural glow. Steve could feel Billy's calloused hands caressing his cheeks as he presses his lips against Steve's in a way that he'd never felt before.

Steve thought he was used to Billy doing things all out. Steve had never watched this man back down from a challenge or half-ass anything... but *this*. **This** was something else entirely. Billy kissed Steve like he was the most precious thing the world had ever created. He kissed Steve like he was something worth cherishing, something worth protecting. He kissed Steve like he was aching like Steve was the only thing that he'd ever want and he needed him at the moment more than ever. He kissed Steve like... he loved him.

Steve was too shocked to notice exactly when Billy had pulled away. His beautiful blue eyes were slightly misty, and he was biting his lower lip. He cleared his throat softly, taking a half step back as he

ran a hand through his hair. Steve panicked when he realized it was because he hadn't been kissing back.

Billy's rough voice broke through the soft chirping of the crickets in the night air. His voice was barely more than a whisper "I'm um... sorry about misreading signals. I uh... thought that you were into me *like that*... I don't want to ruin our friendship so um... we can just pretend that didn't happen? If you want?"

Steve inwardly cursed himself, biting his lip and shaking his head desperately. "No-Billy it's not like that! I-I'm into you! Like... *Really* into you. Um, I was just... really shell-shocked. Um... I promise I'm a better kisser than that... Can we try that again?" Steve couldn't bring his gaze up from the gravel. He knew his cheeks were red, he could feel the heat burning under his skin. He felt like crawling into a hole in the Earth and hiding there for the rest of eternity.

There was silence for a moment. The only sound between the two was the soft sounds of the Hawkins, Indiana wildlife and the scuffing of Steve's shoe against the gravel as he anxiously kicked his foot at the dirt. The longer the silence went on, the more Steve wanted to bolt. His heart picked up once again and his restless fidgeting just got worse with every second that ticked by.

Billy's chuckle broke the silence. A sweet, rough sound that made Steve shudder as he stepped back into his personal bubble. "Was my kiss not good enough for you, Bambi?" He asked as he lifts Steve's chin, making Steve look him directly in the eye. Billy's eyes weren't misty anymore. His brilliant blue eyes were bright and shining in amusement. Steve sputtered, "No! It was! I just! I-I!" Steve shakes his head, refusing to meet Billy's gaze as he mutters, embarrassed. "I just want to kiss you back properly."

“What are you waiting for then, princess?” Billy had leaned in closer, crowding Steve back into his car. He places a hand on either side of him, trapping him against the cold metal. Steve bit his lip, breath caught in his chest as he obeys the older boy. He leans up into him, pressing his lips to Billy’s wide grin. Steve’s hands find themselves tangled in soft blonde locks as Billy kisses him breathless.

The two part eventually, panting and grinning to themselves. Billy peppers kisses along Steve’s cheeks and his jaw. His soft kisses went from making Steve giggle to making his heart skip a beat as they got more passionate. Billy’s kisses travel down Steve’s jaw to his neck as he turns his head submissively to the side. “Nnn... Billy... I need to go home... It’s late.”

Billy’s teeth find Steve’s skin at a perfect spot on his neck that had Steve’s knees threatening to buckle. He gasps loud enough that Billy laughs. Steve groans and hits his shoulder playfully. “Hey! Jerk! I can’t cover that!” Billy can’t hide the smirk on his face as he growls out. “That’s the point, baby~”

Steve's blush just seems to increase tenfold as he hides his face in his hands. “You’re the worst, Billy Hargrove.” He grumbles into his palms. Billy laughs that much harder, placing his hands on Steve’s hips and tugging at his belt loops to bring him that much closer. “Yeah? You really think so, sweet thing?” He practically purrs out his voice matching the smirk on his lips as he leans in. Steve shakes his head, giving him a few more passionate goodnight kisses before he pulls away and walks to the driver’s side of his hummer. “Only slightly~ Goodnight, Hargrove.” He teases as he gets into the car.

Billy grins, winking at him as he waves at him. “See you in my

dreams, pretty boy!” He calls out as Steve backs his car down the driveway and heads down the darkened country roads. He gets back to the empty house he calls home. His heart was still thudding in his chest and he couldn’t seem to stop himself from grinning.

His cheeks were hurting when he slips into the bathtub, humming a soft tune to himself as he scrubs away the dirt from the day. He startles just slightly when his phone vibrates on the side of the tub, almost dropping his phone into the soapy water below him as he opens the newest notification. Billy had texted him... just the realization had Steve’s heart clenching in the excitement in his chest. “Did u make it home ok?”

Genuine concern didn’t seem to fit Billy. Steve was used to the careless, risky Billy that didn’t care if you breathed or not. It was heartwarming, being something that Billy cared about. Steve smiles fondly at his phone as he replies. “Yeah, I’m home safe. How is it you always text me in the bathtub?”

Steve waited for the reply, relaxing in the warm water. The reply wasn’t what he expected. “Send pics?” Steve’s face immediately heated. He sputters, almost dropping his phone. He thought about responding with a dry ‘NO.’ but instead decides to send a picture. Nothing too scandalous. The only thing visible was his mid-thigh, the rest of his body covered in soapy bubbles.

“I was just kidding...but thx Bambi ;)”

Steve groans, sinking lower in the water until just his nose and eyes were above the bubbly mixture. “Oh my god! Go to bed Hercules!”

“Hercules??”

Steve rolls his eyes, knowing this was going to inflate his massive ego even more “Have you seen your muscles? I think your parents did you a huge disservice by naming you William.”

“ew never call me william again”

“Ah yes, Mr. William Hargrove. Your majesty.”

“lol i hate it. goodnight pretty boy~”

“Night, Hercules~”

—

When you’ve been through trauma... there’s always a funny way it presents itself. The younger you are, the more obvious it is. Kids aren’t great at being subtle. They shouldn’t have to be. Kids are meant to be boisterous. Kids are meant to be full of life and curiosity. They’re meant to break their bones falling out of trees and doing dumb things on skateboards... not because of their parents.

Billy had the joy and excitement of life beat out of him at eight years old. That was the first time his father beat him. His mom had still been there. Billy remembers thinking that he was dying. His father’s uncontrollable rage when he’d been found kissing a boy at the beach. His mother had tried to save him... but it had just made things worse. Billy can still remember all those things he shouted.

He would never understand Neil. He couldn't understand how you could threaten to destroy and harm the one thing you're meant to love more than anything else. He could never raise his voice at Jamie, let alone hurt him. No matter what he'd done.

Jamie just wasn't okay today. Billy couldn't blame him. The trigger was a spilled cup. It sent him over the edge. He spent twenty minutes huddled into the corner of his closet. Even when he came out, he was withdrawn, fussy, and anxious. He wailed and raged if Billy got too far out of his sight, threw things that usually made him happy. He actually ended up breaking his favorite plane, which started another meltdown. He even bit his arms to the point of leaving teeth marks.

Billy had spent most of the morning in his son's room trying to rock him through the worst of his episode. He knew how scary it'd been for Jamie... He'd known how terrified he was and how betrayed he felt. Billy knew... He felt it every day. He was at least lucky enough to have been older than three when he dealt with it for the first time.

Billy sighs as Jamie wails in his arms once again. He was sitting with him in his rocking chair, softly swaying back and forth as he croons to his son. "D-DADA!" He sobs, his beautiful blue eyes welling over in tears. "I know, buddy. It's okay, kiddo. I'm here." His sweet little face scrunches up and his bottom lip trembles as the tears slide down his cheeks. "B-but daddy h-he hu-hurt you re-real b-bad-bad."

"Shhh, Daddy's okay, baby. See? Daddy's right here and he's fine." Billy takes Jamie's small hand in his own, placing it against his chest so he can feel his reassuring heartbeat. Jamie snuffles and nods, rubbing his eyes with his hand as he clings to Billy's nightshirt with the other. Billy leans over onto his son's bookcase to grab a small

music box. It was a gift from Sydney, one of Billy's closest friends back home.

Jamie manages a brief smile as he lays his head on Billy's chest. Billy runs his hand through his son's hair as the music plays and the ballerina spins in the center. Jamie always reaches out to allow her tutu to run across his small finger, enamored as he watches her dance to the soft music. The gentle chords of "You are my Sunshine" ringing out in the room's quiet.

Jamie's sputters and hiccups slowly calm as his dad sings to him. His gruff voice low and calm. Allowing him to soothe him into a light sleep. Billy moves them both to his son's bed once the music ends. He was staring at the ceiling when he felt his phone buzz in his sweats. He thought about ignoring it but decided against it.

He opened the notification to a text from Steve. He couldn't help the small twitch of a smile that runs across his face as he reads "Hey, hot stuff~ ;) what are you up to? "

"Cuddlin with jamie hes having a bad day" He responds, softly kissing his snoozing son's hair.

"Oh no :(any way I can help? I can bring over some cookies and my movie supplies?" Billy hesitates, normally Jamie would be ecstatic about cookies and a good movie, but... He's never let anyone see Jamie on his episode days. "Mayb... hes napping rn ill ask when he wakes up."

"Okay! I'm gonna start baking anyway! <3 " Billy's chest fills up with warmth, butterflies fluttering in his stomach in ways they haven't since he was fourteen . "ur an angel baby boy~"

He could practically see Steve blushing through the phone. "Shut upppp" Yeah...Definitely blushing. "Nah. ur too cute 4 that."

The two end up texting throughout Jamie's nap. He woke up feeling a bit better, Billy could tell by the way he smiled and stretched. "Hey little man. You feel better?" Jamie nods, snuggling back into his neck with a contented hum. "Stevie was thinking about coming over so we could watch some movies. You think you'd be up for that?"

Jamie looks up at his dad with his eyes sparkling with curiosity. "Moana?" He asks all soft the excitement audible in his voice. Billy chuckles, kissing his forehead as he says "Sure, buddy. Whatever you want." Jamie nods his head and pulls his most stubborn face. "Ice cream."

Billy laughs as he picks up his kiddo and takes him into the living room. "Okay, okay, you can have a bit of ice cream." Jamie grins, clapping his hands in excitement as he sets himself down to play with some of his toys.

Billy brings him a small bowl of ice cream while he texts Steve to come over. He only responded with a string of exclamation points and a thumb up emoji. It only took him ten minutes, Billy answering the door with Jamie on his hip. Steve completely ignores Billy in favor of his son, opening his arms as Jamie clings to him and covers him in sticky ice cream covered kisses. Billy's heart felt like it was going to burst from the sight alone.

Steve laughs softly, returning the kisses with fervor and tickling his sides lightly. "I heard my little Jamie is having a bad day. Is that true?" Jamie pouts and nods his head, Steve frowns and kisses his

forehead. “Well let’s turn your day around okay?” Jamie gives a stubborn little nod as he curls up into Steve’s shoulder. Steve finally turns to Billy, his cheeks a dark red as he meets his eyes. “H-hey.”

Billy chuckles and smiles. “Heya, pretty boy.” Steve laughs softly, sheepishly kissing his cheek before he goes to follow Jamie’s whims of turning on his show and putting the popcorn in the microwave.

The three spent most of the day curled around one another, enjoying animated movies as the sounds of light rain ran off the windows and the roof above their heads.

7. Hard Candy

Summary for the Chapter:

The reason Billy left Cali

Notes for the Chapter:

I SUCK AT LIFE I SWEAR IM GONNA START
UPDATING REGULARLY AGAIN

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Billy had never meant for Jamie to go through half of what he had. He wanted to spare his son from the turmoil that his father had wrought upon him, but Neil had it out for Jamie before he was even born. Neil would always refer to Billy's unborn son as Billy's greatest failure; a child born from a whore and a faggot. Instead of calling him his grandson...

Jamie wasn't Neil's grandson. Just like Billy wasn't his son. When they were still a part of Neil's life, Billy wasn't even a person. He was just a pawn and his son was just a visual demonstration of all the ways Billy had failed his father. It didn't matter how good his grades were. It didn't matter if he stayed up with Jamie every night, making sure he didn't cry and invoke his father's rage. It didn't matter if Billy juggled all the responsibility of a high school student, a father, and an adult with a full-time job.

It didn't matter if for the first two years of Jamie's life he went without things he desperately needed. For the first two years of his life, Jamie didn't have a nursery or his own bed. He slept with Billy every night. Billy had never even bought a crib. It was always something he tried to save up for, but... By the time he could afford it. Jamie didn't need it. Billy did everything for his son to shelter him from his father's wrath.

If he was at work? Jamie was with Billy's best friends. If Billy was working on schoolwork? Jamie was sitting right there in his lap practicing his ABCs. Jamie's tantrums or crying meant going outside for the two to go on a walk or a ride in the Camaro. Neil never had a chance to abuse Jamie. Billy was always there... but Neil had never really been afraid of Billy, anyway.

Like always, the abuse started with small things... Neil stealing Jamie's toys to laugh at the way he cries, yelling at them both when Jamie laughed too hard or smiled too big, shoving him 'playfully' when Jamie started to walk, not stopping him from hurting himself or letting Billy baby-proof their house because "It'll just toughen up the kid, William. Let him cry."

And as always, the abuse escalated. The day it happened... the first time he hit Jamie. Billy swore it would be the last. It was, but... it still came with a price.

That day was the worst. Billy was fucking exhausted from the fifth night with barely any sleep. Mid-terms were right around the corner. Another night shift calling his name and Jamie had a case of the sniffles, which made him just as fussy and irritable as Billy felt. He was trying to get Jamie to eat anything that morning. He'd finally gotten him to drink some apple juice when his father came down the stairs, rolling his eyes in distaste at the sight of his son and grandson in his kitchen.

Billy tried to ignore it as he rifled through some cabinets, looking for anything he thought he could convince Jamie to eat without too much of a fuss. Billy felt his entire body jolt to attention when his father slapped a hand on the counter behind him and began a tangent

about how “annoying all the racket” Jamie made was the night prior. Billy just set his jaw and tried his best to stifle the urge to sigh. “He’s sick, Dad. It’s just the change in the seasons. I’m sure he’ll be better soon.” He mutters as he turns back around and moves some boxes around in the cabinet, assuming the conversation was over.

Billy never could tell what he would do that would piss his dad off. If he said nothing, he got beat. If he said something, he got beat. If he made eye contact if he didn’t. Hell, if Billy fucking *breathed* wrong, his father was on him. That morning was no exception. Billy had barely moved his second box when his father was on him, slamming the cabinet door into his head. Billy grunted in pain as his world spun and fists slammed into his body and face. He can’t remember when he ended up on the floor... maybe after Neil slammed his head into the counter. He’d had broken ribs a few times, so when Neil’s boot found his chest, Billy knew what that crack meant.

Something came crashing to the floor, Billy looked up as the triage of fists and feet stopped flying his way. Jamie was sobbing quietly. His glass of apple juice had fallen to the floor and shattered. Neil then took his rage out on the defenseless three-year-old. He stomped over to his grandson, profanities, and rage spilling from his mouth. Each word spits out like a dagger drenched in venom. Billy felt completely frozen on the floor, staring wide-eyed as his father approached his child.

Jamie wailed as Neil clutched his arm, screaming in his face as he lifted his hand in a threat. It forced Billy into action, every inch of his body filled with adrenaline so he couldn’t feel the pain as he pushed himself off the floor and shoved his father away from his son. “No. I don’t care what you do to me. Beat me until I’m black and blue I don’t give a shit, but you won’t touch a single fucking hair on his head. Do you understand me?”

Billy had never felt this sort of rage before as he held his dad by the collar with his fists, glaring down into his face as he clenched his jaw, daring his father. Through all the years Billy had lived with Neil, he'd never fought back.

Billy always believed Neil's threats of calling the police on him. Neil was smart. He knew Billy was stronger than him, but the best way to keep his son from fighting back or defending himself was the promise of jail or juvie. The not-so-veiled threat of Neil having buddies in the police force, but that day... it changed.

As Billy stood staring down at his father, he found something in his eyes he'd never seen before. Fear. Neil **feared** him. Billy scoffs, shoving his father to the floor before he picks up his son from his highchair and places him on his hip. "Listen to me. You miserable fuck. I'm leaving. I'm taking my son with me. You are going to let me call my friends and get my shit out of your house and then. You are **never**. to contact me again."

Billy could see Neil's throat work before he gave a hesitant nod and scurried like a mouse back up the stairs and into his room. Billy called some friends, spent a day moving out, and about two weeks couch surfing in various people's homes.

Billy found Jim by chance. He hadn't been able to sleep, too anxious. He knew he wouldn't be able to do this forever. He thought of his mother, not for the first time since she'd left, but for the first time in a long while. The thoughts turned to his mother's family. She always told him she'd come from Indiana, but talking about her family made her homesick and miserable. It left her looking out the window longingly or staring into a void, even if Billy was right in front of her.

He remembered that when she was in a great mood and they were alone, she would tell stories of her younger brother and all the mischief the two of them would get up to in their small town. Curiosity got the best of him and well... he was getting desperate. It wasn't like landlords were just letting 17-year-olds rent apartments. He started by googling his grandmother; he found an obituary. "Iris Hopper is survived by her son, Jim Hopper, her granddaughter, Jane Hopper, and her grandson William Hargrove."

Billy was slightly shocked to find his name among the people who would carry on her name. He didn't know the woman, really. He'd only met her once when he was five. He just remembered that she was kind to him and that she had his mother's eyes. From there it was easy to find Jim and his work phone number. It took another week and Billy arrived in Hawkins.

Now that Billy and his son were safe... the healing process started. It was long and arduous for both of them. The days where Jamie was a shell of himself were the worst, and Billy wanted no one to see his son like that. Jamie was a ray of pure sunshine, and that's how Billy wanted everyone to see him...

But it was like Steve knew. Steve always just... knew.

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While the three were curled up on the couch that night, Jamie ended up falling asleep as Steve ran his fingers through his hair and pressed kisses to the top of his head. Jame and Steve were both curled up and held tight to Billy's chest. He had barely paid attention to the movies,

too focused on the way Steve interacted with his son.

Jamie had only been asleep for five minutes when the telltale signs of night terrors started showing on his sleeping features. His eyes clenched, his mouth pulled into a grimace, a whimper pushed its way out of his lungs. Billy sighs softly, about to gently wake his son when Jamie sits up with a scream, making both Billy and Steve jump. Jamie immediately dissolves into hysterics, wailing as he crawls off the couch and onto the floor. He rushes into a corner, trying to find the safest place in the room as his fear-riddled brain can't place his surroundings.

Billy felt his heart pumping in his chest, the screams of his son taking him back to that day as his breath quickens and he moves onto the floor to comfort his son. Billy was in a full-blown panic attack now, trembling as he sits beside his wailing son, unable to help more as his sense of reality fades. Steve moved slowly, pulling Jamie into his arms and his chest. He rocked slowly, softly humming as he placed kisses on Jamie, everywhere he could reach. Jamie's screams quickly softened into quiet sobs and hiccups.

Billy felt like he was miles away, breath coming out of his chest in stuttering gasps as he closes his eyes. He slowly felt more present and his breath evened out. He came around to feeling Steve rubbing soothing patterns into his thigh, firm and reassuring. As he opened his eyes, they welcomed him with the sight of Jamie curled into Steve's chest, clutching onto his shirt as Steve sang softly in his ear and rocked him gently back and forth.

Billy allowed himself to breathe deeply and lean into Steve's shoulder. Steve hummed softly, wrapping his arm around his waist to pull him closer. Billy felt his lips press a kiss to his head as Steve mumbled out to the both of them. "Hush, boys. I'm here. You're safe.

I promise. I'm here. My sweet boys."

Billy could only nod, sniffing as he buried his head into Steve's shoulder. "s-sorry." He whispered after a few minutes of silence. Steve tuts and squeezes him in response. "You have nothing to apologize for, big guy." Billy didn't know what to say to that, so he just nods again. Jamie was getting frustrated between them, biting into his forearms to keep from grinding his teeth or biting his tongue. Billy sighs and tries to take his son's hands as he pulls away, making angry noises. Billy had just begun to explain as Steve suddenly starts tickling Jamie's sides.

Jamie squeals, squirming in Steve's lap as he can't suppress his giggles. Steve laughs with him, kissing all over his face until Jamie could hardly breathe. Steve smiles down at him, placing their foreheads together. "Hey, baby. Are you still mad, honey?" Jamie sniffled and nods. Steve smiles and boops his nose. "How about instead of biting your arms when you get mad, we do something I call big deep breaths okay? And after that, we can color and get some ice cream. How does that sound?"

It mystified Billy watching Steve interact with his kid like he was a mother of twelve. Jamie nods, getting his cute focused pout on his lips as he looks up at Steve. Steve takes a second to kiss Jamie's cute chubby cheeks before he went on. "okay. We're gonna take a big, deep breath and in between, we're gonna say something that makes us happy. Ready annnnndd Big deep breath!" Steve encourages them both to take a deep breath, all three of them letting it out before Steve says. "Rainbows make me happy." It took a moment before Jamie softly said, "Sunshine." a small smile twitching at his lips. Billy sat with his head on Steve's shoulder until he felt a nudge at his side. "You two." He murmurs without hesitation.

The three continued like that, breathing deeply, thinking of things that made them happy until they had visibly relaxed Jamie. Even Billy felt calmer, his tension easing itself out of his body. Jamie was back to his bubbly, happy self, bouncing at Steve's feet as the two got out art supplies and popsicles.

In a moment of quiet, Steve and Billy drawing alongside Jamie, Billy softly asked how Steve had known what to do. Steve just shrugged, a blush forming high on his cheeks as he smiles sheepishly. "Ahh um...I don't really know... I just... did it I guess." Billy smiles, gently caressing Steve's face and leaning in to place a soft kiss against his lips. "Well thank you, Bambi. I'm...really glad I met you."

Steve's eyes were shining as he looked up at Billy. His grin spreading across his features as he leans in again, lips ghosting against Billy's as he mumbles, "Me too, Hercules. Me too." before kissing him again.